

CITY OF CHARDON PLANNING COMMISSION

Special Meeting Minutes

April 2, 2026

Members Present:

Andrew Blackley, Chairman
Richard Dietz
Robert Emmons
Dan Meleski

Randy Sharpe
Mary Jo Stark, Vice-Chairman

Members Absent

Lene Hill

Also Present:

Gene Arters, Verdantas
Emily Carr, Bostwick Design
Kris Carroll, Geauga County Public Library
Benjamin Chojnacki, Law Director
Doug Courtney, City Engineer
Meagan Dutczak, Bostwick Design
Chris Grau, Chardon City Mayor
Jonathan Holody, Community Development
Administrator

Elaine Holowaty Hurt
Emma MacNilen, Geauga Maple Leaf
Anastasia Nicholas, Geauga Times Courier
Rick Ortmeier, Bostwick Design
Rebecca Repasky, Secretary
Andrew Sargeant, LayerCake
Carol Tuttle

Mr. Blackley called the meeting to order at 6:30p.m.

Mr. Blackley had a correction on page 2. Mr. Meleski made a motion to approve the amended March 24, 2026, meeting minutes. It was seconded by Mr. Dietz. Roll was called. The vote carried 7-0.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Attendance roll was called. Mr. Blackley reminded all that were present to sign in and swore in City Staff.

OLD BUSINESS - none.

NEW BUSINESS

PC Case #26-003: Mr. Holody explained the applicant, Rick Ortmeier, is requesting Final Development Plan approval to allow for the construction of a public library and administrative center. Mr. Holody explained there will be no outdoor activities. There will be a drive-thru and pick-up window. Mr. Holody said a loud speaker system will need approval. The set-backs meet code. The City Arborist approves the tree species. Mr. Holody said Staff has no objections to the Final Development Plan.

Mr. Blackley swore in: Gene Arters, Rick Ortmeier, Kris Carroll and Andrew Sargeant.

Ms. Carroll thanked the Commission for holding a special meeting. She explained taxpayers were not going to be asked for money. They would like the new library to be equitable to all residents of Geauga County.

Mr. Ortmeier showed the Commission a presentation highlighting the surrounding houses/condos/businesses. Where the building sits, it maximizes drainage into the basins and visibility from Park Avenue. Distance to utilities is minimized. He shared this site maximizes green space.

Mr. Arters said the detention basin in front was removed. A catch basin with storm pipe was added to catch water. The area to the south, in between the basins in the back, has a widened green space and is graded. The sidewalk on Park Avenue will be raised up. The borrow pit is now a wet pond.

Mr. Sargeant said the requirements for trees and shrubs are accommodated. There will be a no-mow seed mix surrounding the wet ponds. The slopes will be 3:1. A lot of the existing trees are preserved. Mr. Sargeant said they will look to add more plantings based on what is left in the budget.

Mr. Ortmeier explained the interior layout. He said there is no loud speaker for the pick-up/drive-thru window. It is a voice-to-voice service point. The building materials were shown to the Commission. Mr. Ortmeier said they are exploring putting a wooden canopy structure at the front entrance.

Mr. Chojnacki reiterated to the Commission that design regulations for non-residential buildings in a residential zoning district are limited for Planning Commission authority to rule on. Mr. Chojnacki said the City of Chardon's rules and regulations do not speak to aesthetics for non-residential uses in a residential districts. Review is limited to what is in the Code. The draft Announcement of Decision speaks to those things. Mr. Meleski said insignificant is not clearly defined – it is ambiguous. Mr. Chojnacki said Planning Commission can ask questions on that topic.

Mr. Blackley said he appreciates the changes to the site design and the preservation of trees. Mr. Blackley asked Mr. Arters if he has reviewed Mr. Courtney's comments and if there is any reason not to comply. Mr. Arters said he will review them and work with Mr. Courtney. Mr. Blackley said it will be a condition for approval. Mr. Arters said he understands. Mr. Blackley said based on the preliminary traffic impact study, peak traffic isn't great. He asked if the study warrants a left turn lane into the library. Mr. Courtney said no, but will look at that at construction document time. Mr. Blackley said if the road is to be widened, it will need to come back before Planning Commission. Mr. Blackley asked about the clear zone between the roadway to the detention basin on the east side of the site. Mr. Courtney said the clear zone for this roadway at 35mph is 13' – which is 5' beyond the recoverable clear zone.

Mrs. Stark asked for clarification if there would be a pedestrian drop-off. Mr. Ortmeier said there is a stop at the curb. Mrs. Stark said she is not sure that will work well. She said other libraries have designated drop-off areas. Mrs. Stark suggested a bike rack and benches for out front. Mrs. Stark asked why there are two (2) lanes for book drop-off. Mr. Arters said to avoid trapping vehicles – while one is picking up, another car can go around to the drop-off.

Mr. Meleski said he appreciates and acknowledges the opening of the back and moving the detention basin from the front of the building.

Mr. Dietz said it takes a lot of work and is costly to maintain ponds because cattails can get out of control and consume the volume of the pond. Mr. Dietz asked the applicant to consider minimizing invasive phragmites from growing with embankments that have lots of grass. He said it invites rodents to burrow into the embankments. Mr. Ortmeier said the ponds are designed to be low maintenance with grass embankments.

Mr. Emmons asked if the detention ponds are part of the snow storage areas. Mr. Arters said snow will be pushed towards the detention ponds.

Mrs. Stark commented the Golden Weeping Willow is high maintenance due to its susceptibility to breakage. The roots can clog sewers and drains. The Austrian Pine has susceptibility to blight. Mrs. Stark said these are suggestions. For the evergreens, they are specified by tree height not caliper size and need to be called out by B&B so the contractor does not install container plant sizes. She asked how big the parking lot islands are. Mr. Sargeant said 10'. Mrs. Stark said she is concerned about how the Swamp White Oak

trees will do in that size because they tend to be a wetter type tree. Mrs. Stark asked for grading and utility plans to avoid any conflicts with plantings. She added it will be good to see a detailed layout base bid and alternate bids for the front and entrance. Mrs. Stark asked if no-mow grass is something the City wants to use because it can get 10" – 12" high. Mr. Blackley said it can be a good thing because it can serve as filter buffer going into the pond. Mr. Arters said taller grass helps. Mr. Sargeant said they will be primarily at the waterline to the top of the basin. Stark said it should still be mowed once a year. Mr. Blackley said on the icons on the plans looks like trees are being planted on the slope areas. Mr. Sargeant said they will do the seeding along the slope. Mrs. Stark said they do not know where the water line is on the plan or the grading line. Mr. Blackley asked if the landscape plan is based on the engineer's grading plan. Mr. Sargeant said yes, the majority of trees at the water's edge are Bald Cypress but they can take the Commission's recommendation and move them. Mrs. Stark asked about the #2 on each proposed tree circle, if that refers to caliper. Mr. Sargeant said yes. Mrs. Stark said it does not need to refer to it again if it is on the plan schedule. Mrs. Stark asked for the trees to fit into the existing brush line along the east side. Mrs. Stark said wetland plants are shown, but no wetland plants are called out. Mr. Arters said vegetative bench. Mrs. Stark asked if parking lot screening is required facing the road. Mr. Holody said he is not aware of any requirements but he will look into it.

Mr. Blackley said he likes the cornices on top the building but why are they not highlighted with color. He said it is a nice architectural feature. Mr. Ortmeier said the shadow will be articulation. He added color cornices may be too bold. Mr. Blackley said he really likes the idea of a wooden structure in front and hopes it can be done but knows it is based on the budget. Mrs. Stark agreed and said it sets where the entrance is.

Mr. Blackley asked for feedback regarding the use of concrete masonry unit at the foundation of the library. Mr. Sharpe asked what the alternatives would be. Mr. Ortmeier said they do have a pre-cast or brick masonry unit alternates but concrete masonry unit is wide range and this one is considered decorative. Mr. Emmons clarified it will not be painted. Mr. Ortmeier said no, a natural color. Mr. Blackley asked if the decorative CMUs are structural. Mr. Ortmeier said no. Mr. Blackley said an alternative could be a face brick of some sort. Mr. Ortmeier said it could be but they might do something a little larger scale that is consistent with the scale of the siding. Mr. Meleski had no objection to the decorative CMU. Mr. Sharpe said a lot of it is blocked out by the landscaping and he has no objections.

Mr. Meleski said he appreciates the addition of color to the building likes the proposed front entrance.

Mrs. Stark asked what will happen to the building on the Square. Mr. Chojnacki said the focus of the Commission is the case presented before them.

Ms. Elaine Holowaty Hurt of 455 Sand Trap Circle, Painesville was sworn in.

Ms. Holowaty Hurt asked if the administration areas are 1/3 of the building. Mr. Ortmeier said a little smaller than that. Ms. Holowaty Hurt asked if there are buildings for maintenance storage. Mr. Ortmeier said no other maintenance structures but the garage. Ms. Carroll said the library hires a contractor to take care of snowplowing. Ms. Holowaty Hurt asked if the ponds are child proof. Mr. Arters said while it was not in the code, there is a safety bench 6' into the water. Ms. Holowaty Hurt asked if there is only one (1) set of bathrooms. Mr. Ortmeier said there are public bathrooms, a family bathroom and a bathroom for administration. He said they have met and exceeded plumbing code. Ms. Holowaty Hurt commented the turn appears sharp to the drive-up window. Mr. Arters said there is plenty of room and that is why there are two (2) lanes.

Ms. Carol Tuttle of 10268 Thing Road was sworn in.

Ms. Tuttle said with there only being one (1) entrance into the library, she is concerned with no service drive for truck deliveries – especially since this will also serve as the administration building. Mr. Arters said this is a typical ingress/egress drive. Ms. Carroll said this layout is the same as the Twinsburg library/administration center.

Mayor Chris Grau of 128 North Street was sworn in.

Mayor Grau thanked Staff and Commission members for coming together for a special meeting. Mayor Grau asked how suggestions for the new library are going to be solved for a vote to take place at this meeting. Mr. Blackley said suggestions from Planning Commission members are only suggestions and they cannot be enforced. It is only in the spirit of trying to make this the best possible library. Mrs. Stark said regarding her landscape comments, she saw Mr. Sargeant agree. Mr. Sargeant said he will look into tree swaps and will provide a final landscape plan. Mr. Grau thanked the Commission for hearing Mr. Chojnacki's comments. He said he and the City really want the library to remain in the City. He wished the library well.

Mr. Meleski made a motion to approve the Announcement of Decision with the condition the City Engineer's comments dated March 25, 2026 are addressed for approval the Final Development Plan. It was seconded by Mr. Sharpe. Mr. Blackley said all requirements are met for the variance.

Mr. Chojnacki reminded the Commission that four (4) of the six (6) members will need to vote in favor in order for the approval to pass.

Mrs. Stark suggested including a bike rack and bench at the front entrance.

Roll was called. The vote carried 6-0.

Mr. Blackley said he highly values the library and looks forward to its completion.

OTHER BUSINESS - none.

COMMENTS - none.

ADJOURN

Mr. Meleski made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Mrs. Stark. The meeting was adjourned at 7:43p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

ANDREW BLACKLEY, CHAIRMAN

Rebecca Repasky, Secretary